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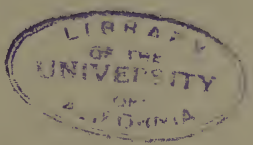

LIBRARY
OF THE

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Edward Griffin Porter

MEMOIR

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EDWARD GRIFFIN PORTER

BY

SAMUEL SWETT GREEN

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MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. EDWARD GRIFFIN PORTER,

BY

SAMUEL SWETT GREEN.

Edward Griffin Porter was born in Boston, 24 January, 1837. He was the son of Royal Loomis Porter, editor and proprietor of the Boston Traveller, a newspaper which he started in 1825. Mr. Royal Porter died in Charleston, South Carolina, where he had gone for the benefit of his health, in 1844. Edward Porter's mother was Sarah Ann Pratt, who was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1812, and is still living.

In 1623, John Porter came from the West of England to Plymouth, in the Colony of that name. Branches of the family afterwards settled in Farmington and Hartford, Connecticut, and in Danvers and Hadley, Massachusetts. Edward Porter was descended, in the sixth generation, from the first settler in East Hartford, Connecticut. A son of the first settler there was James Porter, born in 1720. His son, James, was born in 1745. James's son, Daniel, was born in East Hartford in 1776, but after the war moved to Williamstown, Massachusetts. He had a son, Royal Loomis, born in Vermont in 1801, who was the father of Edward Griffin Porter.

Mr. Royal Porter was an only son. He graduated at Williams College in 1823 and taught school a year or two in New York State before removing to Boston. He is said to have edited the Traveller with signal ability and success, until he died. He was buried near his father in the old cemetery at Williamstown.

Edward Porter lived in Boston until he was seven years old; his father then moved to Canton, Massachusetts, but, dying within a year, the family returned to Boston. Mrs. Porter, left a widow

with three children, — Frank, Edward, and William, — soon married Nathan Carruth, a Boston merchant. The family lived in Hancock Street for about two years and then moved to Dorchester, Massachusetts, where Mr. Carruth had built a large house in the gothic style, on an elevated spot, regarded as one of the most eligible in the vicinity of Boston. Edward Porter always spoke warmly of the never-failing kindness of his step-father.

After attending several private and public schools, Porter, in 1851, entered Phillips Academy, Andover, which was then under the charge of the celebrated educator, Samuel Harvey Taylor. He remained in the Academy during the usual course of preparation for college. He graduated in the summer of 1854, after pronouncing an oration on the Genius of Labor, and left school with high hopes and a stout heart to enter upon college life.

In January, 1853, Porter united, by public profession of faith, with the Second Church in Dorchester, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. James H. Means.

It had always been Porter's wish and that of his friends that he should go to college. In 1854, he was admitted to Williams College, after examination. It was by his own choice rather than that of his friends, who preferred he should go to Harvard College, that he went to Williams. He soon became disappointed with the educational advantages offered there and with his surroundings, and in the autumn of 1855, too late to have his name appear in the first edition of the Catalogue for that year, he transferred his connection to Harvard College. While at Williams College he joined the Alpha Delta Phi Society. In Cambridge he had only a few intimate friends, but those who knew him well were warmly attached to him and respected him highly. He did not attain to a high rank in his Class, — very likely did not seek it, — but was generally regarded as industrious, thoroughly in earnest, a man of considerable attainments and good scholarship.

The Class of 1858 in Harvard College does not stand out conspicuous by reason of a large number of its members having become famous. Still, it is pleasant to remark that nearly every member has done well while he lived, and many members have become eminent. Samuel Pasco was for several years a United States Senator from Florida, and Frederic George Bromberg, William Elliot, and the late William Fitzhugh Lee have repre-

sented in Congress districts in Alabama, South Carolina, and Vir ginia, respectively. Locally, the names of Winslow Warren an Henry Pickering Walcott will be recognized as belonging to me who have won distinction in public life in Massachusetts. Th latter has also been, for several years, a Fellow of Harvard College Among the teachers are Benjamin Graves Brown, Professor o Mathematics in Tufts College, the lately deceased Bradbury Long fellow Cilley, and George Albert Wentworth, for many year instructors in the Phillips Exeter Academy, the veteran Georg Washington Copp Noble of Boston, Eugene Frederick Bliss o Cincinnati, Ohio, and Joseph Alden Shaw of the Highland Mili tary Academy, Worcester, Massachusetts. Of the physicians, th names are well known of John Homans, Robert Thaxter Edes John Gray Park, and George Ebenezer Francis. The Reverend Henry Wilder Foote, Minister of King's Chapel, Boston, was member of the Class; and among those members who becam lawyers are Judge Alfred Stedman Hartwell of Honolulu, Ha waiian Islands, Judge William Henry Fox of Taunton, Massachu setts, and James Clarke Davis, of Boston. Of the representative of the Class in business may be mentioned John Lowell Gard ner, recently deceased, Hersey Bradford Goodwin, and the tw Tobeys, — Gerard Curtis and Horace Pratt. Well-known Bosto families were represented by Fisher Ames, Josiah Bradlee, Loui Cabot, Benjamin William Crowninshield, Ozias Goodwin, Holli Hunnewell, and Edward Bromfield Mason. George Edward Pond who has lately died, was always an editor or editorial writer, an is particularly remembered by his connection with the Army an Navy Journal during the Civil War. The writer of this Memoi has helped to give completeness to the list of occupations in th Class by nearly thirty years' service as a librarian.

Several members of the Class of 1858 have shown a decide interest in American history, and Porter was prominent amon them. The most eminent of these is Henry Adams, known to hi classmates by the name of Henry Brooks Adams, by which name h was designated in the catalogue throughout his college course George Dexter, Foote, John Charles Phillips (Porter's room-mat in the Senior year), Porter, Robert Noxon Toppan, Walcott, an Warren have been or are Resident Members of the Massachusett Historical Society. Adams, Bliss, Dexter, Foote, Francis, Green

Porter, and Toppan are the living and deceased members of the Class who have represented it in the American Antiquarian Society. Many members of the Class have belonged to other historical societies and served as officers in them, to say nothing of those who are past or present members of this Society.[1]

The Class lost some of its most promising members by early death, among them William Gibbons of New York City. He was with the Class for a few months as a Sophomore, but died in Cambridge in that year. The most serious losses, however, came through the Civil War. The time of the graduation of the Class was such that many members served as soldiers. Five lost their lives, and among them were such men of promise as James Jackson Lowell, Henry Lyman Patten, and Thomas Jefferson Spurr. The Class had representatives in both armies. A story is told of a meeting, during the war, of William Fitzhugh Lee, a son of General Robert E. Lee, and Nicholas Longworth Anderson. They were Generals in the Confederate and Union armies, respectively, and found themselves, one night, on opposite sides of a river. Anderson, the story runs, sent a pleasant message to his old classmate Lee, but the latter's feelings were too strong to allow him to reciprocate the courtesy. He sent back word that he could have no correspondence with a man of such objectionable principles as those of Anderson. The latter afterwards made his home in Washington. Lee's place was near that city after the war, and, as before stated, he was in Congress. The two old friends must have often laughed heartily over the above-mentioned scene when they renewed, as they did, their hearty friendship in the Capital of the country.

Porter wrote in his college class-book, 18 May, 1858, that he was to sail for Europe the next day. "My present plans," he continues, "are to travel six months in Europe with my mother, study during the following winter at Heidelberg, and return in 1859 to enter upon the study of theology." He did not return, however, until July, 1861. While abroad he studied at Berlin and Heidelberg and paid his first visit to the East, spending much time in travelling in Egypt and Syria.

In 1861, Porter took the degree of Master of Arts. In Septem-

[1] Messrs. Louis Cabot, Samuel Swett Green, Edward Griffin Porter, and Robert Noxon Toppan.

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ber of the same year, he entered the Andover Theological Seminary, and graduated from it in August, 1864. The writer of this Memoir remembers spending a pleasant day with him at Andover while he was in the Seminary. He took me on a delightful walk in the woods, allowed me to accompany him to a lecture by the celebrated Dr. Edwards Amasa Park, and in the evening escorted me to a charming reception at Abbot Academy. He had a rare faculty of finding out the beautiful scenery and interesting historic spots in every town where he stayed, became acquainted with the men best worth knowing, and, when long enough in a place, was admitted freely to its best social circles. He much enjoyed sharing his knowledge and privileges with a friend.

Mr. Porter was licensed to preach by the Norfolk Association, at Braintree, Massachusetts, 26 January, 1864. In the spring of the same year, while still connected with the Seminary, he went west in the service of the United States Sanitary Commission. There he contracted a fever which seriously impaired his health. After graduating at Andover, he remained at home in Dorchester, taking charge of a church during the absence of its pastor. In the following year he preached occasionally in various places, but did not feel strong enough to accept any proposals for settlement. By the advice of his physician and friends he sailed again for Europe, 31 May, 1866. After some time spent in England, he went to Switzerland and Italy. There he studied with great interest the Waldensian movement to give Protestant churches and schools to all the principal towns, and was almost persuaded to accept the charge of the new Italian church at Venice. He went next to Malta, and thence to the East, where he spent the spring of 1867. The work of the American Mission at Beirut and on the slopes of Mount Lebanon engaged much of his attention. Afterwards, in Greece, he aided in the distribution of some of the American supplies among the Cretan refugees. Returning through Austria and Germany, he reached Paris in time to see the close of the great Exhibition, and arrived in this country again in January, 1868. He spent a short time in arranging the materials collected in his journey, but kept in mind the work for which he had been educated.

On the first of October, 1868, Mr. Porter was ordained minister of the Hancock Congregational Church, a newly-formed Trinitarian

Society in Lexington, Massachusetts. He remained in that position for twenty-three years, and was very successful in his ministry. Although not regarded as a remarkable preacher, he was an admirable pastor and a public-spirited citizen.

As we know, Mr. Porter was not unmindful of the charm of the society of men of high social position or of those who had become eminent professionally or in politics; yet he had a happy faculty, also, of becoming interested in persons in all conditions of life and of making everybody with whom he came in contact his friend. He was universally respected and loved by his people and townsmen, and he was an especial favorite with children.

While in Lexington, Mr. Porter took an active interest in the affairs of the town. He became chairman of the School Committee and a trustee of the Public Library. He also served as chairman of a committee on the order of exercises at the celebration, in 1875, of the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Lexington. When he resigned his charge as pastor, in 1891, his resignation was reluctantly accepted and he was made Pastor Emeritus of the church. He always retained his citizenship in Lexington.

In 1887–88 he made another journey to the East, on that occasion visiting the missionary stations of the American Board in Turkey, India, China, and Japan. He had a strong and active interest in foreign missions, and will be very much missed in missionary circles. He also had a lively interest in the East, evidenced, and probably partially caused, by the several visits which he made to that portion of the world. He seemed to me never happier or more at home than when, standing on a platform, with a map behind him, he explained clearly and thoroughly the political situation and the religious differences in such little known states as Wallachia, Servia, and Moldavia, or expounded the causes and merits of dissensions between Mussulmans and Armenians.

Mr. Porter's services were much in demand to serve on committees and they were cheerfully and efficiently rendered. He held a large number of offices. Thus, he was a member of the Overseers' Committee to visit the Academical Department of Harvard College, and of the Boards of Visitors of Wellesley College and Bradford Academy. He was a Trustee of Abbot Academy, Andover, and of Lawrence Academy, Groton, Massachusetts. We find him helping the Trustees of the American College at Aintab in Asia Minor at

the time of its establishment, and afterwards he became President of its Board of Trustees.

Porter represented Massachusetts in the Historical Department of the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, in 1876, and was a delegate of the American Antiquarian Society at the meeting of the Royal Society of Canada held in Halifax in the spring of 1897, the chief object of which was to erect a monument to John Cabot. His interest in American history was very great, and the study and presentation of portions of it occupied a considerable part of his activities and gave a coloring to most of his literary productions. He was an accomplished guide in pointing out places of historical interest in Lexington, Boston and its neighborhood, Plymouth, and other localities. His services in this capacity were regarded as very valuable, and were freely given when asked for. He always had investigations in hand. The writer of this paper remembers that for two or three years before his death Porter was actively engaged in looking up the path which in Colonial times led from Boston, through Worcester and other towns, to Springfield.

In April, 1876, Mr. Porter was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society, and in 1880 a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society. He was also a member of the American Historical Association and of other historical organizations. In January, 1899, he was chosen President of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and in the following summer he was elected to fellowship in the Harvard chapter of the Fraternity of Phi Beta Kappa.

In 1887, Mr. Porter published an interesting book entitled Rambles in Old Boston, New England. It is a work which is much in demand, and has for some time been out of print. He also contributed to the third volume of the Memorial History of Boston, edited by Justin Winsor, the chapter on The Beginning of the Revolution (1760–1775). In 1875, he published an Historical Sketch of the Battle of Lexington, and edited the volume containing the Proceedings of the Celebration Commemorative of the one hundredth anniversary of that battle. Among his occasional papers which have been printed are: Sermon on the death of the Reverend William Hooper Adams (H. C. 1860); Memoir of John Charles Phillips, prepared for the Massachusetts Historical Society; an Original Document of the House of Washington (thirteenth

century) ; an Address on the Centennial of Washington's visit to Lexington; an Address on Samuel Adams; Four Drawings of Lexington and Concord in 1775; President Garfield's Ancestry; The Ship Columbia and the Discovery of Oregon; The Cabot Celebrations of 1897; Sketches of the English towns of Dorchester, Ipswich, Billericay, and Bedford; and The Aborigines of Australia.

Mr. Porter died 5 February, 1900, at the home of his mother, Ashmont, Dorchester. Two days after, on Wednesday, 7 February, he was buried from the same place. A large assembly came together to do honor to his memory. Among those present were the venerable Dr. Cyrus Hamlin and other clergymen, a numerous delegation from his Society in Lexington, college classmates, and associates in historical and other societies.

Porter died in harness. Only a few days before his death, a corrected proof of Remarks made by him at the meeting of the American Antiquarian Society held in October, 1899, was received by its Publishing Committee. He had agreed to make Remarks at the meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society which occurred a few days after his death, and had made other engagements to write or to speak. From boyhood Mr. Porter had been a student. His life passed smoothly. He was an industrious and useful man; and, busy, loved, and respected as he was, his death will be widely felt.

Mr. Porter was elected a Resident Member of this Society on the fifteenth of March, 1893. On the twentieth of December, following, he was appointed a member of the Committee of Publication, — a position he continued to hold until his death, and in which he rendered valuable service.

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